



Gaining
Christ

THINGS GETTING IN THE WAY

...for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3

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ONE MORNING I HAPPENED UPON THE CHANNEL SHOWING *THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW*. I lingered for a few minutes (Just a few. Really. Trust me.) to see what sort of human oddities they were parading about on that day.

For those of you who have been living in a cave, *The Jerry Springer Show*—now on the air for almost two decades—is the contemporary version of *Truth or Consequences* united in unholy wedlock to *The Gong Show*. The producers go trolling for the lowest life forms they can find, dress them in the sleaziest attire they can obtain from the local thrift shop, then pit them against each other in mock battles—usually incited by one or more of the guests revealing a heretofore hidden, aberrant lifestyle that is met with the displeasure of the other guest(s). It's all rollicking good fun for those with the morals of germs.

On this morning I discovered that good ol' Jer had as guests two women who both lived with—yet who each claimed sole ownership of

the affections from—their live-in boyfriend. They were pretty strange all by themselves, exchanging revelations and looks of stunned disbelief, as they each claimed that this Adonis loved only her. But the place really broke loose when this adored and adoring Greek god came out on stage.

The world has never seen a more miserable-looking slug than the lowlife that crept out in his baggy clothes, scruffy goatee, and multitude of earrings and other bodily piercings. And his personality and IQ matched his loathsome appearance. (Honest, I only watched for a few minutes.) Even the calloused Jerry Springer couldn't hold back his incredulity. Laughing, he stared with disbelief at the two women, and said, "You're fighting over this? *This?*"

As stunningly bizarre as that scene was, it illustrated perfectly the paradox of the Christian settling for—even pursuing—the counterfeit pleasures of this age, when the true and eternal delights of a closer relationship with Christ are at his or her disposal. "You're settling for *this*—when you could have *that?*"

We carry around within us the buds of riches, the true essence of quality and wealth, the knowledge of eternity, and the capacity for holiness. Why, then, do we waste our time with such trivial, base distractions intended for those of meaner birth?

FIRST STEP

There actually is a certifiable first step which the believer must take before it is possible for him to "gain Christ." This first step was spelled out by the Lord Himself to His followers:

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

Mark 8:34

Oh my. Is it any wonder that the world's system cannot comprehend the things of God. This runs counter to every foundational precept built into the human equation. Every last one of us is born with the instinct not just for self-preservation, but self-advancement, self-aggrandizement, self-exaltation. With our very first breath, followed closely by our first squalling temper tantrum, we declare our impatience with anything disagreeable or inconvenient—anything that breaches our comfort level.

From conception it is programmed into every "son of Adam" and "daughter of Eve" to do everything they can to remain comfortable, content, and to fill their life with things they think will make them happy.

Innocently enough we accumulate things and more things with every passing year. Our intentions may be right and true, but one day we awaken to the discomfiting truth that we

have, over the years, accumulated not just things, but dependencies. Whatever they may be, from objects to friends, from habits to obsessions, we have surrounded ourselves with emotional crutches, and our heart has been stolen by them.

The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

Matthew 19:20-22

What Jesus was saying to the young man was that if he wished to be *whole*, to be mature ("complete," "perfect")—that is, if he wished to be everything God knew to be his full potential, he would need to get rid of all those things which had become an obstacle to that wholeness. The young man had grown dependent on *things*—as with each of us, not just physical things, but emotional, spiritual, personal things that had become a sad substitute for the pure joy that could be ours by gaining Christ.

Our wholeness is not to be found in the things of this earth, but in Him. At best the

accoutrements of this age are given us to serve the temporal form in which we have been housed. Most are not, in and of themselves, evil; many are true necessities. But when necessities become dependencies, they have morphed into obstacles to impede our passage upward into holiness. They slow, and often halt the process of our maturity—our wholeness.

“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:20-21

When we “deny” self we evict ourselves from the throne room of our God-space. We consciously and purposely remove our temporal dearness, which has never fit properly anyway, from this space designed to fit only Christ.

The first step in gaining Christ is to make sure that *He* is the one sitting on the throne of our heart.

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee.*

Emily E. Elliott

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